

I Claim:

1. A prosthesis to replace a natural articular process of a natural facet joint on a vertebral body comprising

5 a prosthesis body accommodating fixation to the vertebral body at or near a pedicle and without support by a lamina, and

10 an artificial facet joint structure carried by the prosthesis body adapted and configured to replace a natural articular process of a natural facet joint.

15 2. A prosthesis according to claim 1

wherein the artificial facet joint structure is adapted and configured to replace a natural articular process of a natural facet joint after removal of at least some of a lamina from the vertebral body.

20 3. A prosthesis according to claim 1

wherein the artificial facet joint structure is adapted and configured to replace a natural articular process of a natural facet joint after removal of at least part of an accessory process from the vertebral body

25 4. A prosthesis according to claim 1

wherein the artificial facet joint structure is adapted and configured to replace a natural articular process of a natural facet joint after removal of at least part of a transverse process from the vertebral body

30 5. A prosthesis according to claim 1

wherein the artificial facet joint structure is adapted and configured to replace a natural articular process of a natural facet joint after removal of at least part of a pedicle from the vertebral body.

35 6. A prosthesis according to claim 1

wherein the artificial facet joint structure is adapted and configured to replace a natural articular

process of a natural facet joint after removal of at least some of the natural articular process from the vertebral body.

7. A prosthesis according to claim 1
5 wherein the artificial facet joint structure is adapted and configured to replace a natural articular process of a natural facet joint after removal of at least some of the natural articular process and of at least some of a lamina from the vertebral body.

10 8. A prosthesis according to claim 1
wherein the artificial facet joint structure is adapted and configured to replace a natural articular process of a natural facet joint after removal of at least some of the natural articular process and of at 15 least some of an accessory process from the vertebral body.

9. A prosthesis according to claim 1
20 wherein the artificial facet joint structure is adapted and configured to replace a natural articular process of a natural facet joint after removal of at least some of the natural articular process and of at least part of a transverse process from the vertebral body.

25 10. A prosthesis according to claim 1
wherein the artificial facet joint structure is adapted and configured to replace a natural articular process of a natural facet joint after removal of at least some of the natural articular process and of at least part of a pedicle from the vertebral body.

30 11. A prosthesis according to claim 1
wherein the artificial facet joint structure is adapted and configured to replace a natural articular process of a natural facet joint, and
35 wherein the prosthesis body is adapted and configured to replace at least some of a lamina of the

vertebral body.

12. A prosthesis according to claim 1
wherein the artificial facet joint structure
is adapted and configured to replace a natural articular
5 process of a natural facet joint, and

wherein the prosthesis body is adapted and
configured to replace at least some of a mamillary
process of the vertebral body.

13. A prosthesis according to claim 1
10 wherein the artificial facet joint structure
is adapted and configured to replace a natural articular
process of a natural facet joint, and

wherein the prosthesis body is adapted and
configured to replace at least some of a pedicle of the
15 vertebral body.

14. A prosthesis according to claim 1
wherein the prosthesis body is adapted and
configured to replace at least some of a lamina of the
vertebral body.

20 15. A prosthesis according to claim 1
wherein the prosthesis body is adapted and
configured to replace at least some of a mamillary
process of the vertebral body.

25 16. A prosthesis according to claim 1
wherein the prosthesis body is adapted and
configured to replace at least some of a pedicle of the
vertebral body.

17. A prosthesis according to claim 1
wherein the artificial facet joint structure
30 is adapted and configured to articulate with a portion of
a facet joint of an adjoining vertebral body.

18. A prosthesis according to claim 1
wherein the artificial facet joint structure
is made of at least one selected prosthetic material.

35 19. A prosthesis according to claim 1

wherein the selected prosthetic material includes polyethylene, rubber, tantalum, titanium, chrome cobalt, surgical steel, bony in-growth material, ceramic, artificial bone, or a combination thereof.

5 20. A method of replacing, on a vertebral body, all or a portion of a natural articular process of a natural facet joint using the prosthesis defined in claim 1 to provide improved support for the spinal column, the method comprising the steps of

10 (i) removing all or a portion of the natural articular process from the vertebral body, and

 (ii) fixing the prosthesis as defined in claim 1 to the vertebral body to replace the removed portion of the natural articular process with the artificial facet joint structure.

15 21. A method according to claim 20 further including a step of removing at least some of the lamina from the vertebral body.

20 22. A method according to claim 20 further including a step of removing at least part of a pedicle from the vertebral body.